

Message Text

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PAGE 01 COLOMB 03000 171230Z
ACTION NEA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A
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SUBJ: ELEVEN MPS ELECTIONS CHALLENGED

1. BY AUGUST 15, THE FINAL DAY FOR FILING ELECTION CHALLENGES, ELEVEN PETITIONS HAD BEEN FILED, SEVEN AGAINST THE SLFP AND FOUR AGAINST UNP MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT. THE NUMBER OF PETITIONS IS SMALLER THAN THOSE FOLLOWING EARLIER ELECTIONS, PROBABLY BECAUSE OF A STRICTER ELECTION LAW AND A REQUIREMENT FOR A HIGHER SECURITY BOND, 5,000 RUPEES FOR THE FIRST CHARGE AND 2,500 RUPEES FOR EACH ADDITIONAL CHARGE. CHARGES AGAINST THE MPS RANGE FROM BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION TO FALSE STATEMENTS AND HOLDING A MEETING IN A PLACE OF WORSHIP. FIVE OF THE PETITIONS WERE FILED BY VOTERS, THE REMAINDER BY DEFEATED CANDIDATES.

2. MOST NOTABLY ON THE SLFP SIDE, PETITIONS CHALLENGE THE ELECTION OF MRS. SIRIMAVO BANDARANAIKE FOR FALSE CHARACTER ATTACK, USE OF UNDUE INFLUENCE, AND GENERAL BRIBERY; OF HER SON, ANURA BANDARANAIKE, FOR CORRUPT PRACTICES AND BRIBERY; AND OF MAITHRIPALA SENANAYAKE FOR GENERAL INTIMIDATION, USE OF UNDUE INFLUENCE, AND MAKING A FALSE STATEMENT. THE MOST PROMINENT UNP'ER CHALLENGED IS GAMINI DISSANAYAKE. HE IS CHARGED WITH HAVING MADE A FALSE STATEMENT AGAINST ANURA
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BANDARANAIKE AND WITH HOLDING A PUBLIC MEETING AT A PLACE OF WORSHIP. ANOTHER INTERESTING CHALLENGE IS THAT OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER W. DAHANAYAKE, DEFEATED INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE FROM GALLE, AGAINST HIS SUCCESSFUL UNP OPPONENT.

3. BY LAW, ALL PETITION CASES MUST BE SETTLED WITHIN SIX MONTHS. PERSONS CONVICTED OF ELECTION OFFENSES MAY LOSE THEIR

CIVIC RIGHTS AND BE FINED UP TO 300 RUPEES. IF AN MP IS CONVICTED, BUT NO LOSS OF CIVIC RIGHTS IS IMPOSED, HE IS ELIGIBLE TO BE A CANDIDATE IN THE RESULTING BY-ELECTION FOR HIS DISTRICT.

4. THE PERCENTAGE OF SUCCESSFUL CHALLENGES FOLLOWING PREVIOUS ELECTIONS HAS BEEN SMALL. WITHOUT KNOWING WHAT THE EVIDENCE IS AGAINST THE CHALLENGED MPS, HOWEVER, THE POSSIBLE NUMBER OF SUCCESSFUL CHALLENGES THIS TIME IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT. THERE IS TALK THAT MAITHRIPALA SENANYAKE'S ELECTION STANDS A GOOD CHANCE OF BEING OVERTURNED; HIS MAJORITY WAS ONLY 366 VOTES AND REPORTEDLY THERE WAS BLATANT POLICE INTERFERENCE IN HIS DISTRICT. THE ODDS ON THE BANDARANAIKES BEING OUSTED ARE MORE PROBLEMATIC; UNLESS THE EVIDENCE SUPPORTING THE CHARGES IS INCONTROVERTIBLE, THEY WILL LIKELY RETAIN THEIR SEATS. THE CHARGES AGAINST DISSANAYAKE SEEM SUFFICIENTLY TRIVIAL THAT THEY MAY BE DISMISSED.

WRIGGINS

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